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GERMAN LABOR COLONIES.

An experiment in practical philanthropy while in process of development is seldom studied with so much scientific care as is that of the German labor colonies. A tolerably complete account of these experiments on behalf of the unemployed has already been given in this *Journal*, and it is only necessary here to indicate the main features of their recent history. The materials for this supplementary note are at hand in the recent numbers of the organ of the associated colonies, *Die Arbeiter-Kolonie*, and especially in Dr. Berthold's admirable statistical study of the work and its results.*

It is a common vice of the statistics given out by charitable associations that they simply inform us as to the amount of relief and the number of instances in which it is given, but not as to the number of different persons aided through a series of years, or as to the specific character of the beneficiaries. This is especially true of work for the homeless poor; and it is therefore fortunate that the German colonies, on Dr. Berthold's suggestion, have adopted a system of sociological book-keeping that gives us an unusually clear insight into the character of the work and the extent and tendency of its influence. When a man is admitted, the superintendent of the colony to which he has applied makes out a card on which certain specified facts regarding himself and his previous history are recorded. These cards are eventually sent to the central authorities, and the facts recorded on them give the material with which Dr. Berthold works.

The first task is to bring together the cards sent in from different colonies, or from the same colony at different times, which relate to the same man. The result of this initial operation is to show that nearly one-fourth of the admissions are readmissions. There are now 24 of these colonies, having accommodations for something more than 2,800 men. Bert-

* G. Berthold, *Statistik der deutschen Arbeiter-Kolonien für 1887-89. Mit Rückblicken auf die Entwicklung und Bedeutung derselben seit 1882, auf Grund der offiziellen Zählkarten.* Berlin, 1891. 8vo. pp. 150.

hold's latest tables are for the two years ending March 31, 1889. During this time 20 colonies were in operation, to which there were 13,575 admissions; but, by excluding the repeated names, it is found that only 10,403 different men were thus aided.

This fact indicates at once that the colonies are not serving the class for the benefit of which they were instituted. It was originally thought that they would afford an opportunity to unemployed but willing and capable men, to earn a living and a respectable outfit of clothes preparatory to obtaining some permanent position in the regular industries of the time. The matter of entrance and departure was accordingly left very much as the individual beneficiary desired to arrange it. The large proportion of readmissions indicates that this freedom is being abused by habitual vagabonds.

This conclusion is confirmed by a further study of the inmates. The applicants are for the most part industrially worthless or of little value. Three-fourths of them have already been in correctional institutions. A considerable number are advanced in years, few have thoroughly learned any trade, and many, while willing to work for a time, will not work steadily when subjected to the temptations of ordinary life. Of the 10,403 persons admitted during the two years, the facts regarding precedent imprisonments were obtained in 10,037 cases. The following condensed table arranges these facts according to the number of times each person was admitted to the colonies:—

Times admitted to the Colonies.	Never in a Correctional Institution. (Per Cent.)	Had been in a Correctional Institution one or more times. (Per Cent.)	Total of Different Persons.
1	27.2	72.8	6,013
2	17.7	82.3	2,142
3	17.2	82.8	985
4	14.7	85.3	462
5	16.4	83.6	231
6	15.3	84.7	118
7	8.9	91.1	56
8	25.0	75.0	12
9	—	100.0	9
10	25.0	75.0	4
11	—	100.0	4
12	—	100.0	1
All persons	23.1	76.9	10,037

The proportion of criminals and misdemeanants here shown is about the same as that given in tables previously published.

A review of the reasons of departure of those leaving the colonies for a series of years does not show a satisfactory tendency. Of those leaving all the colonies in 1885-86, work was found for 27.4; 1886-87, 24.7; 1887-89, 20.8. On the other hand there was a proportional increase in the number of those who left at their own request, almost all of whom returned to a life of vagabondage. The percentages of this class for the same periods were as follows: 54.1, 57.8, 60.4. The proportion of those who left on account of drunkenness, laziness, or bad conduct, is nearly constant for the three periods. Of the 11,849 departures from the colonies, 913, or 7.7 per cent., took place within seven days after admission. It is further shown that the demand for admission increases faster than the number of places available:—

Year.	No. of Colonies.	Applicants admitted.	Applicants refused admission.	Applicants refused because of lack of room.	Places available.
1888	20	5,802	1,691		2,312
1889	21	6,594	2,252	1,054	2,477
1890	21	6,962	4,690	3,558	2,603

This rapid increase in the number of applicants for whom places could not be provided, together with the large number of readmissions and the unsatisfactory showing as to the causes of departure, seems to indicate that the colonies are training a class of men to accept the conditions of colony life as a permanent thing. The labor test is not sufficiently deterrent, but with intervals of wandering freedom and probable debauch these "colony bummers" are willing to spend their lives in the various colonies. The last twenty-five pages of Berthold's work are taken up with detailed accounts of the movements of a large number of individuals of this class.

Dr. Berthold suggests that there ought to be a minimum period of detention for all admitted, that readmissions should be made progressively difficult, that greater efforts should be put forth to find work for all leaving the colonies, and that some system of friendly supervision for ex-colonists should be provided.

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